

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 1608

USIA FOR IEU-SHIRLEY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS SOPN PROP SHUM CZ
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH A CZECHOSLOVAK TV FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMENTATOR

1. OLDŘICH VEJVODA, C. 30, CZECHOSLOVAK TV'S SOVIET-AMERICAN AND
ANGLO-AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMENTATOR AND HIS WIFE VISITED THE PAO'S
FOR AN EVENING OF FILMS AND CONVERSATION JUNE 12.

2. VEJVODA BEGAN BY SAYING HE WAS SORRY ABOUT RECENT FILMING
INCIDENT AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WHEN HE AND HIS CAMERA CREW CAME ON
EMBASSY PREMISES SHOOTING AND DEMANDING TO SEE THE AMBASSADOR ABOUT
THE GABRIEL CASE. HE SAID, "THE IDEA FOR THIS DID NOT COME FROM
CZECHOSLOVAK TV," AND, "AFTERWARDS, THERE WERE DIVIDED VIEWS AS TO
WHETHER IT WAS WORTH DOING." PAO POINTED OUT EMBASSY TERRITORY IS
SOVEREIGN, THERE ARE WAYS OF DISCUSSING PRESS QUESTIONS WITH
EMBASSIES
OTHER THAN ENTERING WITH CAMERAS RUNNING, AND DID VEJVODA THINK HE
HAD ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING THROUGH THIS EXERCISE? LATTER RESPONDED,
"I WAS DOING WHAT I WAS TOLD TO DO. IT WAS ONE MONTH SINCE
MRS. GABRIELOVA'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER ABOUT HER TWO
CHILDREN IN CALIFORNIA AND WE WANTED TO SEE WHAT THE
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PRESIDENT'S ANSWER WAS."

3. VEJVODA THEN ASKED ABOUT THE STATUS OF HIS REQUEST FOR
A JOURNALISTS VISA TO DEPART IN EARLY JULY FOR A ONE-WEEK ATTEMPT
TO INTERVIEW THE GABRIEL CHILDREN "AT THEIR UNIVERSITY IN CALIFORNIA,"

PLUS COVERAGE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE UNITED STATES "BECAUSE

CARTER MADE A LOT OF PROMISES ABOUT CUTTING UNEMPLOYMENT."
PAO SAID REQUEST WAS BEING PROCESSED ROUTINELY AND VEJVODA
WOULD BE INFORMED OF RESULTS AS SOON AS PROCESSING WAS COMPLETED.
VEJVODA SAID PLANNED TRIP WOULD BE HIS THIRD TO U.S. AND HE REALLY
PERSONALLY LIKES AMERICA AND TRAVELLING IN THE U.S., BUT THERE
IS LITTLE HE CAN DO ABOUT HOW CZECHOSLOVAK TV PRESENTS U.S.
AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY "BECAUSE WE HAVE TO FOLLOW DIRECTIONS."

4. PAO ASKED VEJVODA HOW HE WOULD LIKE IT IF WE WERE WILLING
TO GRANT HIM A VISA ONLY ON CONDITION HE NOT COVER GABRIEL CASE.
LATTER SAID THAT WOULD BE REPELLENT TO HIS JOURNALISTIC ETHICS.
PAO ASKED WHY WAS IT MORE LOGICAL TO EXPECT AMERICAN
JOURNALISTS TO AGREE NOT TO COVER "DISSIDENT"
OR CHARTER 77 STORIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. VEJVODA SAID,
"JOURNALISTS MUST OBEY THE LAWS OF THE COUNTRY THEY WERE
WORKING IN. I NEVER DO ANYTHING IN SECRET IN THE UNITED STATES.
YOU ALWAYS KNOW WHAT I AM FILMING." PAO RETURNED TO POINT:
HOW COULD VEJVODA JUSTIFY DUAL STANDARDS FOR JOURNALISTS ADMISSIONS?
LATTER SAID, "I AGREE WITH YOU, BUT THIS IS NOT A QUESTION I CAN
DECIDE. YOU SHOULD TALK WITH THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS IN
THE FOREIGN MINISTRY." PAO SAID WE HAD.

5. VEJVODA SAID THE PROBLEM WITH WESTERN JOURNALISTS IS
WHEN THEY COME TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA IT IS LARGELY TO SEEK SENSATIONAL
STORIES. SAID DURING DUTCH FM'S VISIT IN MARCH, PRAGUE JOURNALISTS'
UNION PUT ON AN EXTENSIVE LUNCHEON IN INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL FOR
17 VISITING DUTCH JOURNALISTS, ALL OF WHOM ARRIVED AN HOUR LATE, AS
THEY WERE UPSTAIRS INTERVIEWING CHARTER SPOKESMAN JAN PATOCKA.
PAO ASKED VEJVODA IF, WHEN HE WAS WORKING, WOULD HE CHOOSE A LUNCH
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OVER A HOT STORY? VEJVODA SAID NOT ONLY DID THE DUTCH JOURNALISTS
MISS THE LUNCHEON, BUT NONE OF THEM ACCOMPANIED THE DUTCH FM ON A
FACTORY TOUR THAT AFTERNOON. PAO ASKED VEJVODA IF HE REALLY ENJOYED
LOOKING AT FOOTAGE OF FACTORIES.

6. REMAINDER OF EVENING WAS SPENT ON LESS POLITICALLY LOADED TOPICS.
VEJVODA HAS MADE 30 TRIPS TO THE WEST IN PAST SIX YEARS AS TV
COMMENTATOR. HIS MOST RECENT COVERAGE IS AN HOUR-LONG DOCUMENTARY
ON NORTHERN IRELAND TODAY "POINTING OUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS
THERE." HE AND HIS WIFE WERE INTRIGUED WITH THE FILMS ON
CONTEMPORARY
AMERICAN MUSIC, AND HE DISCUSSED AT LENGTH ABOUT BOB DYLAN,
THE ROLLING STONES, ROBERT REDFORD. VEJVODA WORE AN ITALIAN
WIDE-LAPPELLED SUIT, AND SAID, "MY WIFE AND I ARE A MODERN YOUNG
COUPLE WE LIKE AMERICAN CULTURE. WE HAVE A GOOD STEREO SYSTEM
AT HOME AND I LIKE AMERICAN MUSIC."

7. COMMENT: VEJVODA IS A COMBINATION OF THE PARTY TRUE BELIEVER
AND THE TRENDY YOUNG MAN. HE IS GLIB AND AGILE, BUT NOT AN

ORIGINAL THINKER, AND WHEN THE DECIDING POINT COMES ON ANY QUESTION,
THE PARTY IS ALWAYS RIGHT. DESPITE OBVIOUS POLITICAL DIFFERENCES,
THE EVENING WAS A PLEASANT ONE. VEJVODA IS THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK
FOREIGN AFFAIRS MEDIA PERSON EVER TO ACCEPT A SOCIAL INVITATION
FROM THE PAO. THE RUDE PRAVO FOREIGN AFFAIRS EDITOR DECLINED A
POSSIBILITY OF MEETING WITH A VISITING NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT
LAST YEAR, AND OTHER JOURNALISTS DECLINE INVITATIONS WITH
REMARKS LIKE "THIS WOULDN'T BE THE RIGHT TIME." STILL, WE WILL
KEEP ON TRUCKIN'.
BYRNE

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